UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO   : COINS Project Manager

Serial: COINS/Ø64-7Ø
DATE: 18 February 197Ø
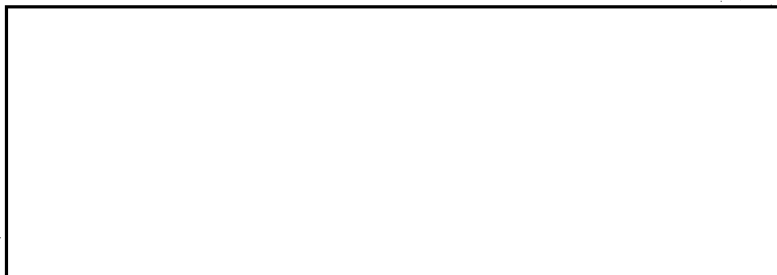
FROM : Chairman, COINS User Support Panel

SUBJECT: Monthly Report (January)

I. GENERAL

A. **CUSP MEETING** - The following persons met at NSA on 29 January:

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The next meeting is scheduled for 1ØØØ on 26 February at DIA.

B. **GUIDELINES FOR COINS FILE SPONSORS AND USERS** - The Operating Procedure on this subject has been coordinated with all participating agencies and is now in final draft form. Publication is expected in March, and distribution will be made to those who were previously provided with copies of the Catalog of COINS Files.

C. **USER LOG FORMS** - Some of the panel members feel that the requirement for the user log forms is hindering our efforts to establish user families; therefore, it is recommended that use of the form be suspended for at least six months. Meanwhile, the Test and Analysis Panel can make use of statistics derived from the system itself, and can obtain user comments through personal interviews.

D. **OPTAA FILE REMOVED** - DIA's Operational Targeting Analysis (OPTAA) file has been removed from the on-line system because it is so outdated. No input data has been available since the bombing of North Vietnam was halted in late 1968.

E. **INSTALLATION FILES** - Mr. Zablackas has informed that DIA plans to add more installation files to COINS when they roll over to ANSRS. Ultimately, they expect to cover the whole world, except North America.

F. **"DON'T CARE" CHARACTERS** - All systems in the network will now accept the question mark (?) for a "don't care" character (the CIA system was recently modified to allow this). Additionally, the CIA system will also accept the pound sign (#), and the DIA system will also accept the dollar sign ($) for a "don't care" character.

GROUP-1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

G. CUSP MAILING LIST - A list of persons associated with CUSP activities is included as Attachment 1 to this report. All except two of the persons on the list are "voting" members of the panel; [   ] is our COFSA consultant, **25X1** and [   ] of IHC is a regular guest at our meetings

25X1

H. USER PROBLEMS - I am including as Attachment 2 to this report a short article on time sharing, clipped from the December issue of Computer Decisions, which should provide some solace to COINS management personnel. Apparently what we keep excusing to our COINS users as an "experiment" situation is not much worse than normal in the time sharing field.

II. TRAINING

A. USER FAMILIES - Mr. Wakeman has informed that participation at STATE in COINS may pick up as a result of their activation of a users panel. Its first meeting was held in January and considerable interest was expressed. The situation at other agencies has not changed significantly, but elimination of the user log form may help some to generate user interest (see Section I C).

B. FILE SEMINARS

1. FPN - At DIA's request, [   ] of NSA (A71) and I met **25X1** with analysts at Arlington Hall on 15 January to discuss use in COINS of the three **25X1** files on [   ] The meeting was held as a question and answer session, which proved to be most beneficial in satisfying the analysts needs (some of these same analysts had been given briefings at an **25X1** earlier date by [   ] It now appears, however, that very **25X1** little use will be made of these files by DIA analysts, because they do not include compartmented information.

III. USER AIDS

A. WORKBOOK - All of the collected samples have been cleaned up and the narrative portions of the workbook are being reviewed for accuracy by CUSP members. A cut-off date has been set at 13 February, and publication/distribution is expected to be completed in March.

B. CATALOG - A new issue of the Catalog of COINS Files is being considered. CUSP members have been asked to review it and provide their recommended amendments to the Chairman, who will consolidate and publish as required. This will be a project for March/April.
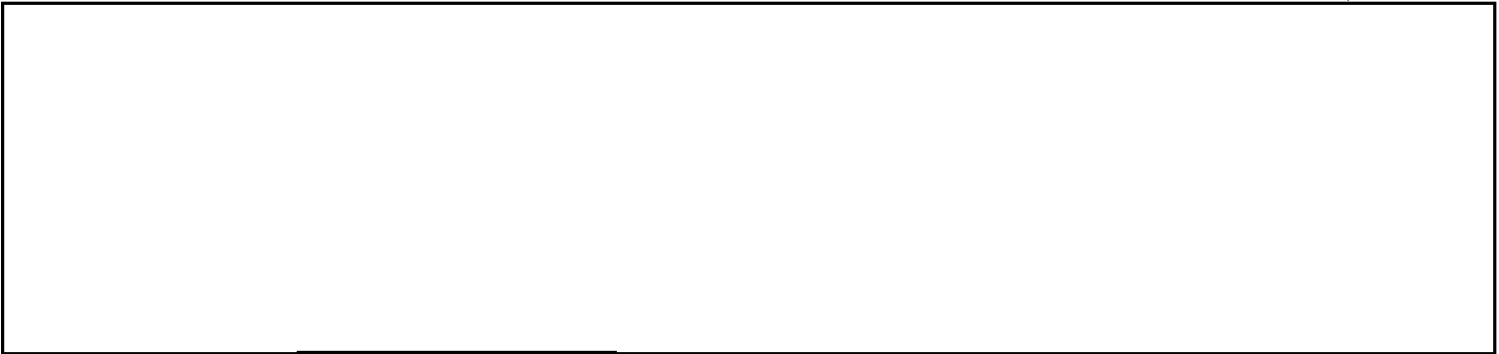
25X1

    D. COFSA [   ] has informed that in the initial rollover to the ANSRS system DIA will not have any pre-programmed query or output capability; therefore, the on-line file descriptions will not be available. He has suggested that before we undertake to write new programs, we consider the possibility of changing to hard copy distribution of the COFSA file. The initial reaction of the panel is that this would suffice, if done on a fairly frequent basis, but the problem will be studied further before a recommendation is made.

IV. COINS DATA APPLICATIONS

Nothing new to report.

25X1

Chairman, COINS User Support Panel

cc: CUSP Members
     Subsystem Managers
     Chairman, Test & Analysis Panel
     Chairman, CACIP
     Chairman, Software Security Panel

25X1

COMPUTER DECISIONS

PERSPECTIVE   DECEMBER 1969

TIME TO SHARE

A time-sharing salesman, in attempting to sell you on the virtues of time-sharing, will spend much time on the advantages of time-sharing – how you can quickly and accurately solve all your problems with a terminal right in your very own office. However, like a good salesman should, he will neglect to warn you of some of the pitfalls you might run into. Reliability of a time-sharing computer system is of utmost importance. If a service is not there when you need it — you don't want it. Usually a test or demonstration will not reveal some of the hidden disasters you might incur.

Most time-sharing services can quote to you that their machines are up $X\%$ of the time. Your salesman may honestly tell you that his machine is "up" 99% of the time. If a system has 7 day, 24 hour service, you may not care if it runs at 4:30 am or on Sunday night. The 1% "down" time may occur at 10:00 am Tuesday just as you have to get the weekly sales report run for your boss. He might not understand that it is the computer's fault that the report isn't completed.

How does the "down" time of a time-sharing system manifest itself? There are several different types of down-time. In the first case, the central processing unit may fail due to a hardware or software problem. Your time-sharing terminal is happily chugging out the answers, when suddenly it becomes mute. You pound it and kick it but still— silence. This period of inactivity may be just a few minutes or perish the thought, over an hour. Usually these inoperative periods run in clusters. If the machine is unavailable at 10:00, up at 10:15, down at 10:45, you can be sure it's going to be a bad day. If your time-sharing vendor is on his toes, he'll provide you with a back-up system. However,

any data files you have stored on the disk will most likely not be transferred to the second system. Now what do you do? If you're clever, you've kept a paper tape or card copy of all data files and programs stored on the disk, so that you can pull them out of the drawer and feed them onto the back-up computer. If there is no back-up, you're out of luck. Patience is a virtue in this case. Even worse is the situation where you've been hunt-and-pecking to get your program in for a half hour and the machine comes to a dead stop. If you haven't typed in SAVE or some similar command intermittently, all your work is for nought. You can usually claim monetary credit for the lost time. But you will still have to repeat your work at a later time. Some users subscribe to more than one service so that they always have an "up" system to use.

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One of the beauties of time-sharing is disk storage. Thousands of characters of information—programs and data—are stored for you at the computer center and are available at your fingertips. However, disks are not infallible. They are subject to a variety of illnesses. Time-sharing companies nightly "dump" the contents of the disk onto magnetic tapes, sometimes twice, as a precautionary measure. However, one Tuesday morning you call your friendly computer and receive a message that regretfully the disk has been reloaded as of last Thursday night. Sometimes more than a day goes by before the computer center personnel are aware of a disk problem. Where have all your programs gone? Anything you stored after last Thursday is wiped out. Once again, paper tape comes in handy. If not—you're out of luck.

Not to be forgotten, of course, are the omnipresent telephone problems. You may be on a bad line. You may have a bad data set. The data set to which you are connected at the computer center may be bad. The communications computer may be down, in which case you can't even receive a message on your terminal. After dialing the computer several times and calling your local time-sharing representative and screaming you just resign yourself to waiting for the problem to be resolved. Sometimes the communications problems may cause strange results. For example, you might see someone else's program on your terminal. Or someone else may see your program. Some current security procedures are not fail-safe.

With this multitude of possible sources for problems, it is sometimes difficult for you to pinpoint the trouble. A common problem is the terminal itself. If your terminal breaks down it may take a day or two to get it repaired. Oftentimes the various suppliers—time-sharing vendor, terminal supplier, and telephone company—will blame each other. Here you are the poor distraught user. Your terminal will not type—the keyboard is locked. You don't know whose fault it is. You call the salesman from ABC time-sharing and he says to call the terminal repairman. The repairman comes over and says it must be the computer. The computer operator says it must be the phone. This round robin of passing the buck can be very frustrating.

Naturally reliability varies from one service to another. Disasters may account for just a fraction of the productive time your time-sharing computer spends in processing answers at speeds faster than a flick of a slide-rule. However, patience, foresight, and a loud voice are essential to a happy time-sharing user. While paper tape may seem cumbersome and a pain in the neck, you can't be too careful. .

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